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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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Impending Railway Crisis

1. "Since autumn 1952 the Polish railway system has entered a critical period. The following observations are dated January 1953 and earlier.
2. "Many reports indicate that the working capacity and morale of railway personnel, maintained - despite adverse conditions - on a fairly even keel during the first years after World War II, has finally passed the endurance point and is sharply decreasing. The main reasons for this breakdown are the continuous overwork and undernourishment of the workers.
3. "Reports speak of increasing carelessness everywhere, necessitating the checking and double-checking of all work performed. This decline in reliability and quality work is particularly noticeable in the servicing and maintenance of engines, rolling stock and other equipment. It is known, for instance, that on many lines two stokers instead of one are now assigned to each locomotive. Such situations contribute to the general shortage of trained manpower on the Polish railways. It hits the recruitment and training of young men who one day will be called upon to replace present personnel.
4. "Railway employees contend that the entire traffic is now maintained almost exclusively by the older personnel who have pre-World War II training and experience. Most of these men are between 50 and 60 years of age. It is just these employees who react most strongly to the deteriorated living standards and who are the most unreliable politically. The new Stakhanov methods and Socialist competitions are more agreeable

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to the less skilled but physically stronger type of worker, who, under the new system is often promoted to a higher position without having the necessary qualifications.

5. "One result of this breakdown is that many train schedules are no longer kept. This is true of most passenger and freight trains. Long-distance trains are frequently four or five hours late; eg on such lines as Gdynia-Krakow (600 km.). Local trains on these lines are side-tracked at junctions to let the late long-distance trains pass, and thus get behind schedule themselves. There is traffic confusion all over Poland, even in the central and western districts where up to about summer 1952, train schedules were usually maintained. Apart from other consequences, such as delayed deliveries and increases in transportation costs, the confusion creates difficulties for train and station crews, who are forced to work overtime continuously.
6. "Another reason for the deterioration of railway traffic is that the Polish railways now get only inferior quality coal, in most cases coal slack. Most of the engines are not suitable for stoking with slack; there is usually not enough steam and the engine capacity cannot be efficiently exploited. Engine defects, partly due to this bad coal, are frequent. The repair workshops are full of locomotives requiring overhauling.

Effect of the Soviet Norm System

7. "The Soviet norm system and competitive work methods have been introduced on the Polish railways. For example, an engine driver gets a premium if he drives his engine for a certain number of kilometers without repairs. The number of kilometers varies with the type of engines - for the large freight train locomotives it is usually 100,000 km. Theoretically the engineer also gets a premium for fuel economy. At present, this economy system is meaningless as it is impossible to economize with coal slack which in itself is not good enough to maintain the efficiency of an engine. Engines driven with insufficient steam pressure are more likely to break down than under normal conditions.
8. "Most engine drivers have been forced to undertake obligations to drive their engines for a certain number of kilometers without repairs. This makes them conceal minor defects or tinker with small repairs themselves. According to engine drivers, their work is now a constant gamble: 'Can I risk completion of the set kilometer limit with the existing minor defects or patch-up repairs, get the premium and the right to turn in the engine for an overhaul - or will such an attempt result in some accident or more serious damage to the engine, causing me to be dragged before a Military Court on charges of sabotage?' Within the Gdansk railway management alone there were 12 such trials during August and September 1952.
9. "If a minor engine defect is discovered, the driver must pay a cash fine which is often as high as his monthly wage. Because of the great responsibility, the premium and fine system and the threat of being tried and as a saboteur, nobody wants to become or to remain an engine driver. The old experienced men become fewer each month. In their place come less skilled, hastily trained, young men who influenced by propaganda are willing to sacrifice dependability to concentrate on competition results. This results in more frequent damage to engines and equipment, in a general deterioration of facilities and in increasing repairs.
10. "I talked to many Polish railwaymen who had some knowledge of the Soviet railway system, where engine drivers have to struggle with the same problems. I asked how it

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was possible for the Soviet railways to function at all since the system producing such bad results in Poland had been in operation in the USSR for years. The replies of these railwaymen can be summed up as follows:

- (a) As a result of the competitive norm system, the locomotive resources of the USSR are more run down than any outsider can imagine.
- (b) Soviet railwaymen differ in character from the Poles: They are able to endure much more in sullen passivity. After passing the critical transition period from the old system to the new - the period which is now taking place in Poland - they have had plenty of time to adapt themselves for the strained working conditions.
- (c) Moreover, Soviet railway personnel have, with passing time, developed a system and the solidarity to cheat the authorities. The train crews and office personnel join hand in hand to make false reports and bypass regulations - and they get away with it. Developments in Poland have not yet reached this stage. The present responsible office personnel are inexperienced. Appointed by the Communists they are eager to please the regime. They have not yet realized that after the workers, the next step will be to make the office personnel responsible for the shortcomings in railway traffic.

Inferior Equipment and Shortages

- 11. "All equipment delivered to the railways is of inferior quality, especially the rails which crack from heat and frost. Derailments are frequent, especially on lines with heavy traffic. Along various stretches signs have been put up to warn the engine drivers against poor track conditions, advising them to reduce speed. Track walkers are responsible for the condition of the rails. Although they submit detailed reports, the tracks are not repaired in time because the delivery of rails and such accessories as sleepers, screws and gravel is delayed. The only thing not in short supply is unskilled manpower. But the track repair crews are often idle for days after arriving at an assignment because there is no material with which to start work.
- 12. "The Katowice-Gdynia line, which is the so-called 'coal line' built in 1933 by Schneider-Creusot, used to be travelled by 25-30 heavy trains consisting of some 50 thirty-ton wagons, every 24 hours. Today the daily number of trains is not more than four or five, and they run mainly at night. Railwaymen believe that it is mainly because of the weakened condition of this line that part of the export coal transports have been diverted to Szczecin. It was cheaper to put up a new line for 16-ton cars in Szczecin than to put the Katowice-Gdynia line in order. Both Gdansk and Gdynia have large, modern loading cranes. Most of them have stood idle since the bulk of export coal transports was rerouted to Szczecin.
- 13. "Lubricating oil is delivered to the railway depots in very small quantities and is of extremely low quality. It is said that all better lubricating oil goes to the USSR. Lots of the oil gets stolen from the depots. The car tenders get so little that they cannot keep the axles in proper condition. Freight wagons particularly are generally in such bad condition that most of them require overhauling. A railwayman employed at the railway repair workshop in Bydgoszcz, who worked on the German railways before World War II, believes that 75% of all the freight wagons running presently in Poland should be repaired. He believes that the freight wagon situation is inevitably approaching a crisis, when so many wagons will have to be withdrawn from circulation at the same time that the whole transport plan will collapse.

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Bydgoszcz Repair Yards

14. "The railway repair workshops in Bydgoszcz are the largest in Poland. They are located southeast of the town. There is a large, 6 km long, 'marshalling' yard, where cars from all over Poland are collected for repairs. There one can see many cars which were damaged during World War II and have not yet been repaired. They stand in the open and rust. Soon most of them will be beyond repair. The Bydgoszcz repair workshops employ 800 workers.

Production of Rolling Stock

15. "There are four important rolling-stock plants in Poland:

- The Stalin Works (former Cegielski & Co) in Poznan,
- The Stalin Works (former Pafawag) in Wroclaw,
- The railway carriage factory in Sanok,
- The railway carriage factory in Rzeszow.

Mostly engines and passenger cars are built in Poznan. The main production of the Wroclaw plant is Soviet-gauge freight wagons, which can be easily switched from broad-gauge to narrower European gauge by changing the "base-frame".

16. "Although a good many new freight cars are being built in Poland, not many can be observed in use on Polish lines. They are exported to the East and are never seen again. The new Pullman type coaches, built mainly in Poznan, are also seldom seen.

Crowded Passenger Trains

17. "The state of passenger cars has sharply deteriorated since 1947-48. Almost all the coaches are terribly dirty and full of vermin. Everything removable has been stolen. Most of the cars on the less important lines have not even glass in the windows.
18. "Passenger traffic is intensive, and the trains are overcrowded. Since the trains are constantly behind schedule all stations are permanently full of waiting passengers. The intense traffic is due to the fact that tickets are relatively cheap. For example, a ticket from Gdynia to Jelenia Gora, a distance of about 620 km., costs 32 Zl, ie less than the price of 1 kg. butter on the black market. Moreover, there are few passenger trains and the existing ones have too few coaches to take all travellers. There is no attempt to adapt the trains to the needs of the ordinary travelling public.
19. "On main lines and long distance trains there are second and third class sleepers, but tickets for them are sold only in large towns. Only privileged persons travel by sleeper. Certain trains reserved for international traffic have also first class coaches. These are very expensive and mostly reserved for diplomats, high officials and other privileged persons, mostly Soviets. These international trains also have dining cars, but the prices are about twice as high as in Warsaw's smartest restaurants.

The SOK (Sluzba Ochrony Kolejowej)

20. "The PKP (Polish Railways) have their own police, the Sluzba Ochrony Kolejowej (SOK). These men are posted at all stations. They act as a kind of Military Police, because railwaymen are militarised under present Polish law. The SOK also have ordinary police duties relating to the passengers in and around stations. SOK has a UB section with

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offices at all major stations. These UB sections are controlled by officials of the Soviet railway troops who supervise the safety of Soviet transit trains. These Soviet officials deal mainly with technical problems and have direct contact with the Transit Department of the Railway Ministry in Warsaw. Almost all officials in that department are Soviets. As of early 1953 these Soviet officials had no political tasks.

21. "As a rule Soviet trains have their own police or MP's who are responsible for the trains as they pass through Polish territory. At Polish stations the Soviet supervisory personnel stationed in Poland and attached to the UB section of the SOK act as liaison between the Soviet train police and the SOK. Very few uniformed Soviet railway policemen can be seen at Polish stations. Most of them wear civilian clothes.
22. "SOK members are armed with automatic rifles, ordinary rifles and pistols. One of their tasks is to help the UB check the documents of train passengers. Because the trains are overcrowded, it is practically impossible to do any checking while the train is in motion. Consequently it is done at the stations. Under such circumstances it is always possible to sneak on a train or to jump off without UB control. The UB knows this, and the railway stations are heavily guarded, often by special patrols with trained dogs.
23. "It is rather dangerous for a person to enter a railway station without a ticket and the necessary identification documents. Such a person is likely to be detained and questioned. It is still more dangerous to be found at freight stations, particularly at night. The guards shoot without warning at anything that moves. All persons who are caught in freight stations or marshalling yards at night, without good reason, are automatically suspected of sabotage. The authorities have an almost hysterical fear of saboteurs."

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